

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRE-PARLIAMENTARY SESSION ROUNDUP

1. SUMMARY: SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY SESSION BEGINNING JANUARY 23 WILL PROVIDE SCENARIO FOR HEATED PUBLIC DEBATE OF ISSUES OF CRITICAL LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE. OVERWHELMING MAJORITY ENJOYED BY RULING NATIONAL PARTY (NP) ENSURES THAT SAG'S POLICIES AND PROPOSED LEGISLATION WILL BE ENDORSED. OPPOSITION PARTIES, HOWEVER, CAN BE EXPECTED TO PRESS HARD ON CERTAIN ISSUES IN HOPE OF EMBARRASSING GOVERNMENT AND POSSIBLY ENCOURAGING CHANGES. ANGOLAN POLICY WILL PROBABLY TOP LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DEBATED IN COMING WEEKS FOLLOWED IN IMPORTANCE BY GENERAL DEFENCE MATTERS, NATION'S ECONOMY, INTERNAL SECURITY AND SAG'S RACIAL POLICIES. END SUMMARY.

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WM SAG'S ANGOLAN OPERATION WILL PREDOMINATE DEBATE IN

OPENING SESSIONS. SPECULATION RIFE THAT PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WILL MAKE IMPORTANT STATEMENT ON ANGOLA AT FIRST WORKING SESSION OF PARLIAMENT JANUARY 26. STATEMENT MIGHT INDICATE NEW DIRECTIONS IN ANGOLAN POLICY AND, IF MADE, WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY ATTEMPT TO TAKE STING OUT OF EXPECTED OPPOSITION CRITICISM. SMALL PROGRESSIVE REFORM PARTY (PRP) CONTINGENT WILL CHARGE SAG WITH IRRESPONSIBLY INVOLVING NATION IN ANGOLAN MISADVENTURE AND URGE IMMEDIATE PULLOUT OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS. (NOT CLEAR AT THIS POINT WHETHER PRP WOULD SUPPORT PULLBACK TO POSITIONS WITHIN ANGOLA DEFENDING CUNENE RIVER PROJECTS.) POSITION OF OFFICIAL OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY (UP) IS, AS USUAL, LESS CLEAR. JAN. 21 PRESS REPORTS THAT LIBERAL TRANSVAAL UP LEADER JAPPIE BASSON HAS CRITICIZED SAG FOR CREATING NEW DANGERS FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND FOR RUINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF NAMIBIAN ISSUE BY ANGOLAN INVOLVEMENT. DOUBTFUL WHETHER MAJORITY OF UP WILL SUPPORT BASFGN. MORE LIKELY, UP WILL ATTACK SAG'S SECRETIVENESS IN HANDLING OF ANGOLAN OPERATION AND CERTAIN INJUSTICES AND SNAFUS IN MILITARY CALL-UP AND OPERATIONS, BUT WILL REFRAIN FROM CRITICISM OF BASICS OF SAG'S ANGOLAN POLICY.

3. ANGOLAN ISSUE WILL COLOR WHOLE DEBATE ON DEFENCE SPENDING AND ITS IMPACT ON ECONOMY. BUDGET WILL CALL FOR INCREASES WHICH WILL NOT SERIOUSLY BE CHALLENGED BY OPPOSITION. MAJGEN WEBSTER, DIRECTOR OF DEFENCE FORCE RESOURCES, HAS CALLED FOR BEEFING UP OF PERMANENT FORCE TROOPS, THAT IS, PROFESSIONAL ARMY CADRE. OPPOSITION HAS ALREADY CRITICIZED SAG FOR FIGHTING ANGOLAN WAR WITH LARGELY INEXPERIENCED CONSCRIPTS. PRESUMABLY NP CAUCUS WILL ALSO DISCUSS THIS MOST EXPLOSIVE OF ISSUES BUT NO INDICATION EXISTS AS YET, DESPITE WEBSTER'S STATEMENT, WHETHER SAG WILL MOVE TO INCREASE MARKEDLY SIZE OF STANDING ARMY. POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF REMOVING MORE MEN FROM ECONOMY ALREADY STRAPPED FOR SKILLED WORKERS NOT LOST ON GOVERNMENT.

4. WHOLE QUESTION OF NATION'S ECONOMIC MALAISE WILL PROBABLY BE FOCUS OF SOME DEBATE. MOST ECONOMIC OBSERVERS AGREE THAT EFFECTS OF WORLDWIDE RECESSION HAVE YET TO BE FELT FULLY IN SOUTH AFRICA DESPITE CURRENTLY HIGH INFLATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RATE. MOST BELIEVE THAT ECONOMY WILL CONTINUE DOWNTURN INTO AT LEAST FIRST MONTHS OF 1976 (AND PERHAPS LONGER) BEFORE BOTTTOMING OUT. OPPOSITION'S SKILL IN TRANSLATING COMPLEX ISSUES INTO MEANINGFUL TANGIBLES FOR AVERAGE MAN WILL LARGELY DETERMINE WHETHER TOPIC WILL BE IMPORTANT OR SUSTAINED POINT OF DEBATE.

5. AS ALWAYS, RACE WILL PERMEATE PRACTICALLY EVERY DEBATE.

UNCLEAR WHETHER TRANSKEIAN INDEPENDENCE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 1976 WILL NECESSITATE SPECIFIC LEGISLATION. IF SO, DEBATE MAY WELL FOCUS ON CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF NOMINAL TRANSKEIANS LIVING OUTSIDE OF TERRITORY AND, BY EXTENSION, ON WHOLE ISSUE OF GOVERNMENT'S URBAN BLACK POLICY. NO INDICATION YET WHETHER SAG PLANNING TO INTRODUCE ANY NEW LEGISLATION TO AMELIORATE DIFFICULTIES OF URBAN BLACKS. CERTAINLY NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES CONTEMPLATED. MINOR, THOUGH NOT UNIMPORTANT, MODIFICATIONS PROMISED LAST YEAR (E.G., HOME OWNING RIGHTS, TRADING OPPORTUNITIES) HAVE NOT YET BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE.

6. EXPECTED PUBLICATION OF LONG AWAITED THERON COMMISSION REPORT ON COLORED AFFAIRS WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR OPPOSITION TO BRAND SAG'S COLORED POLICY AS BANKRUPT. CURRENT SPECULATION THAT THERON COMMISSION WILL AVOID MAKING ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR MAJOR POLITICAL, AS OPPOSED TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC, REFORMS WILL NOT DIM NATURE OF ACCUSATION.

7. MOST HEATED CONFRONTATION CAN BE EXPECTED OVER ISSUES OF INTERNAL SECURITY. SAG HAS INDICATED INTENTION TO CREATE PERMANENT LEGISLATIVE INTERNAL SECURITY COMMISSION AS RECOMMENDED BY SCHLEBUSCH COMMISSION AND TO INTRODUCE NEW LEGISLATION WHICH WILL EITHER COMPLEMENT OR SUPERCEDE SUPPRESSION OF COMMUNISM ACT. INTENT OF LATTER IS EXPECTED TO BE TO WIDEN DEFINITIONS OF SUBVERSIVE BEHAVIOR BY RECOGNIZING THAT ALL THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY NOT NECESSARILY COMMUNIST INSPIRED. NATIONALIST PRESS ALREADY HITTING HARD ON THEME THAT, GIVEN PERILOUS NATURE OF COUNTRY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION, THIS NO TIME TO BE "SOFT ON" COMMUNISM OR NATION'S ENEMIES. PRP WILL PREDICTABLY FIGHT CREATION OF COMMISSION AND INTRODUCTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF LEGISLATION. HOWEVER, UP LIKELY TO BE SERIOUSLY DIVIDED ON BOTH COUNTS, THOUGH IMPOSSIBLE TO JUDGE WHETHER DIVISION WILL LEAD MAJOR UP SPLIT WHICH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS CONTINUES TO PREDICT.
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